DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 232 816 RC 014 233

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TITLE Indians and Aging: You Can Go Home Again.
PUB DATE 7 Dec 82
NOTE 32p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Anthropological Association (81st, Washington, DC, December 3-7, 1982).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Age Differences; Alcoholism; American Indians; Biographies; Citizen Participation; Community Attitudes; Cultural Background; *Cultural Influences; *Ethnicity; Females; Foster Family; *Life Satisfaction; *Older Adults; Reservation American Indians; Role Models; Role Perception; Social Status; *Urban American Indians; *Urban to Rural Migration
IDENTIFIERS Pine Ridge Indian Reservation SD; Sioux (Tribe)

ABSTRACT

"Going home again," a financially secure return to the homeland in old age, is easily accomplished by, and constitutes an economically efficient strategy for, urban American Indian elders if they have maintained their ethnic identity. Emphasis on ethnicity varies with life stage: full immersion in early life, eclipsed ethnicity in middle life, decreased involvement in the public sector and re-intensification of ethnic identity of old age. Alcohol use may also be correlated with age: younger Indians may drink heavily, but by mid-thirties alcohol consumption is reduced, and few Indians over 50 years old drink heavily, as that would be anomalous to culturally viable roles for the elderly, such as shaman, moral leader, or foster parent. For urban Indians, location of significant family members, viable membership in the chosen community, economic pragmatism and availability of health services are explanations for residence choices: remaining in the city or going "back home." A year and a half after returning to the Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation, Mrs. Mabel Walking Eagle (pseudonym), who spent 26 years in Los Angeles, has been through stages of re-entry into local life and has attained two culturally appropriate age-set roles: election to the Chapter House council and foster care of two children. (MH)

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INDIANS AND AGING: YOU CAN GO HOME AGAIN

Paper to be presented in a symposium

entitled

ANTHROPOLOGY AND AGING

at the

1982 Meetings of the

American Anthropological Association

Washington, D.C.

December 7, 1982

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INTRODUCTION

In 1953 the Department of the Interior, in a broad-reaching implementation of U.S. Federal policy, initiated programs which facilitated the movement of major numbers of American Indians off reservation lands and into urban industrial complexes (Officer, 1971). More than 200,000 Native Americans have migrated to major American cities in the 30 years since the Bureau of Indian Affairs relocation and vocational assistance programs were established (U.S. Census 1980).

Some Indians did not adjust positively to urban life and eventually returned to their respective reservations or home lands. The larger percentage of them, however, found positive features of urban life such as improved housing, education, social services and greater economic opportunities adequate compensation for the felt loss of well-being wh ch established cultural and social ties of reservation community life had provided.

Native American adaptation and adjustment to urban life has been well documented: Denver (Snyder, 1968, 1971; Graves, 1972), Albuquerque (Hodge, 1969), Minneapolis (Drilling, 1970), San Francisco (Ablon, 1964; Fuchs, 1974; Bowman et al., 1975), Chicago (Garbarino, 1971), and Los Angeles (Price, 1972; Burns et al., 1974; Fiske, 1975; Bramstedt, 1977; and Weibel, 1977). Urban Indian communities are characterized by dispersed settlement patterns, extreme tribal heterogeneity, high mobility, connectedness to social ties on the reservations, continued dependence on kin assistance in social and political services and familism (Ablon, 1964; Snyder, 1968; Fiske, 1975; Weibel, 1977; and Price, 1978).

Few urban Indian populations are numerous enough to allow

for the development of geographically bounded, ethnically homogeneous communities. Rather, individual families or family groups are interspersed in predominately Anglo or Mexican-American communities and have had to accommodate habituated folkways to the constraints of urban environment and lifestyle (Weibel, 1977). Urban Indian communities are pan-tribal, interactional networks rather than geographically defined enclaves. Ablon (1964), in a study of the San Francisco area Indian population, noted the development of pan-Indianism as a supra-tribal ethnic category. Recognition of commonalities which transcend traditional societal boundary markers functions as a coping strategy in the face of the large and often threatening other-ethnic matrix in which Indians in cities are embedded. By tenaciously continuing to practice a number of ceremonial and symbolically Indian activities in urban settings designed as "Indian land",[1] diverse and occasionally rival tribesmen have been able to maintain a measure of ethnic identity, solidarity and community (Weibel, 1977).

Indians who migrated to urban centers in the mid-fifties and remained to work in industry and social services to their ethnic communities are currently approaching retirement age. Many of the earliest emigrés have been steadily employed in urban industrial centers for 20 years or more. They approach retirement with substantial pensions and old-age benefits accrued. Some urban Indian families have bought homes and look forward to a financially secure urban old age.

American Indians, however, continue to enjoy a unique legal relationship with the Federal government (Officer, 1971). If an

Indian lives on reservation he/she is entitled to a variety of community services guaranteed by treaty, and provided by the Federal government to Native Americans in perpetuity. Urban Indians who have reached retirement age can live out what I have come to think of as the reve d' emigré. Most immigrant groups to urban centers in the United States have tended to perpetuate a nostalgia about a youthful golden age ("the good old days") in "the old country". Many fantasize about a financially secure return to the homeland in old age.

Unlike European immigrants, American Indians can and do opt to live out the reve d' emigré. "Going home again" is easily accomplished by, and constitutes an economically efficient life career strategy for, urban Indian elders. On most reservations housing costs are minimal; tribal housing programs build new houses and repair old ones with HUD funds at cost. No sales taxes are paid. Various kinds of social services are provided without cost by the Indian Health Service and tribal and community health programs. One need not worry about quality of a reservation based education in childless old age. American Indians can realize considerable financial advantages with retirement to the land of their birth. Consequently, host cities--Los Angeles included--are experiencing a growing exodus of older American Indians. This social change phenomenon has prompted a longitudinal and processual study of the interaction of ethnicity and successful aging step Maintenance of one's ethnic identity, though eclipsed at certain stages of the life cycle, is integral to the success of the major life career shift - "going home again".

Although ethnicity has been used politically and demonstrated publically by blacks, hispanics and American Indians, intensity of ethnic identification is more often an individual-psychological and an intentional state of being rather than an inherent given (Schwartz, 1966; Rose, 1968; Barth, 1969; Bennett, 1973; and Epstein, 1978). Ethnicity is associated with the private, rather than the public sector, of society although, at times, it becomes important and integrative to make public displays of ethnic pride. Integrally associated with the private sector ethnic identity, then, is situationally relative and subject to shifts in salience levels at different life stages.

During one's youth the influences of family, church, and community immerse the individual in an ethnic enculturational matrix. The demands of adulthood (education, career, travel, extra-community interaction, a move to an urban center) pull the individual into a wider pan-ethnic, public arena which necessitates the development of pan-ethnic interactional skills. During this life phase one's ethnic profile may be eclipsed in order to lessen the stresses of cross-ethnic encounters and facilitate mobility and achievement in the pan-ethnic or non-ethnic public sphere (Myerhoff, Simic and Weibel, 1982).

With old age and retirement from, at least, the public work arena, the need for pan-ethnic or non-ethnic accommodations are minimized. The elder may find, in fact, that folklore learned in their youth for which they are the repositories becomes valued social currency in and of itself. The individual can resort to familiar and valued modes of assistance, interactional spheres

and ascribed roles citing ethnic tradition as the validating organizing principle; this assures continued roles, and power as societal beings by writ of established ethnic traditions of which they are the authorities as well as the embodiments (ibid.).

Intensity of ethnicity as a life career is then, cyclical. Full immersion in early life is followed by a period of eclipsed ethnic identity in middle life. Upon separation from total involvement in public sector at old age ethnic identity re-intensifies and becomes an integrating social force (op. cit.).

> "The elderly Indian, down through the years has been the preserver of the Indian race, Indian culture, Indian history... They represent a repository....."
>
> Opening remarks of Wendell Chino at the National Indian Conference on Aging, Summary Report, at Phoenix, Arizona on June 15-17, 1976, representing the National Tribal Chairman's Association, Inc.

These remarks echo our concept of ethnic identity as a resource to be exploited in old age. Ethnicity offers the old a continuing identity and source of control which may be compartmentalized during different stages of the life cycle but which remains available for use when needed or wanted. Ethnicity has been shown to facilitate not only the creation of meaningful attachments to non-kin peers but the establishment of a broader sense of community (Myerhoff and Simic, 1978; Myerhoff, 1977, 1980).

Ethnicity and old age can provide a synergistic power to the individual by control they exercise over valuable resources, i.e., ritual and healing knowledge, oral histories of both family and ethnic dimensions, property, ethnic markers, political power, or as Ortner(1973) puts it, the whole enterprise of "generating and

sustaining meaningful forms".

Ethnics have special resources that may be mobilized to give elders special advantages, among them: training in the management of marginality and often poverty; training in the capacity to draw on internally-provided definitions of worth generated from within the ethnic group rather than drawn from the often negative and stereotyped perceptions of mainstream society; training in autonomy and in improvisations that use culture in innovative ways where normlessness exists. Ethnicity constitutes a reservoir of norms, relationships and knowledge that may be employed in the development of long-term careers for successful elders, and in the management of the inevitable and fortuitous crises that individuals must confront toward the end of the life cycle. How ethnic identity facilitates and/or promotes "going home again" is the focus of this article.

INDIANS AND AGING - WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR.

While considerable demographic, ethnographic and historical information has been published on American Indians, there is limited information on Indian elderly (Block, 1979). The lack of research findings in this area is due, in part, to the fact that, American Indians are among the least populated American ethnic groups and have the smallest proportion of elderly members.

What data are available is generally demographic and consists of the following assertions:

The number of Indian elderly is increasing. Improved health conditions on reservations has increased the percentage of elderly

Indians in the last decade. Currently the growth in percentage of Indian elderly parallels the growth in percentage of elderly in the nation as a whole (ibid.).

Indian elderly tend to be rural. The majority of older Indians are located west of the Mississippi River on or near reservations. Approximately one-third of the American Indians leave the reservation, but well over half of those who do so return (Doherty, 1971).

The number of elderly Indians in urban centers is increasing. A surprising proportion of Indian elderly live in cities. Based on a 20 percent sample of the 1970 census data on American Indians by age and residence, the following distribution is given: 43 percent of Indians over 62 years of age live in urban areas and 57 percent live in rural areas. Nearly 15 out of every 100 urban Indian adults are elderly and 6 out of every 100 urban Indian adults are very old, i.e., 70 years of age and over. (Out of every 100 rural Indian adults 23 are elderly, while 10 are at least 70 years of age.) More of the urban elderly are females (58 percent), often living alone or near their children and grandchildren (American Indian Physicians' Report, 1978).

Indian elderly are familistic. Indian elderly are four times as likely on reservations and twice as likely in urban areas as their Anglo counterparts to live within an extended family. Nine percent of the urban and 17 percent of the reservation Indian families are three to four generation families (American Indian Physicians' Report, 1978).

Indian elderly are poor. "The Indian elderly compose the most deprived group of individuals in the U.S. Existing on little

or no income, the aged Indian lives in a state of grinding poverty, the scope and impact of which is unknown to any other population group in the U.S." (Benedict, 1971). The severity of living conditions among the Indian aged has prompted expenditures of substantial sums of federal funds for social services designed within a culture-sensitive operational framework. Those services included housing, nursing homes, nutrition, recreation, availability of health services, transportation, communication, employment, education, guaranteed standard-of-living, and an Indian Desk at the National Institute of Aging (Advisory Council on the Elderly American Indian, 1971).

Indian elderly are viewed by some authors as disenfranchised members of their communities. While several authors wax eloquent about a golden age of Indian familism and maximal social integration, other writers devote themselves to documenting the deplorable physical and psychological conditions of life among contemporary Indian elderly.

The aging Indian was traditionally not merely among the elderly, but an "elder", a person of substance and value, a person with inviolate dignity, a person held in great respect. Councils of elders were the active centers of tribal decision-making, holding a place of prominence in governmental and political affairs. It was through the elders that the culture of the people was transmitted across generations. Lacking a written tradition, the entire history, language, art, and value system of a people were passed onto younger generations by the elderly through their oral tradition (National Indian Council on Aging, 1978).

While elders were ascribed respect as a function of age in some tribal societies, old people did not automatically have power or privileges in all tribal societies. Select members, however, did gain significant power as individuals. The position of the aged in a given society was expressed in terms of how much old people contributed to the resource of the group, balanced by the cost of the act and compounded by the degree of control they have over valuable resources (Amoss, 1981).

In hunting and gathering societies old age tended to be defined in terms of withdrawal from the major subsistent activity of hunting. Chippewa old men, having become unable to hunt, felt useless, left out, and powerless. Sometimes the Chippewayan were even forced to abandon their old people when it bacame a choice between the old people dying and everybody dying (ibid.).

In these societies women tended to weather the aging process better than men. As long as woman could walk she could gather, as long as she could see, she could do light domestic chores. Particularly important in this regard was the woman's ability to care for small children, often their own grandchildren (op. cit.).

Lack of social cohesion and well-being among contemporary Indian elderly, it is felt, results from younger Indians adopting the dominant society's values and mores and, in the process, losing much of their own cultural ethos. As a result, elders are no longer considered the most important members of their society. Often neglected, they live out lonely lives of poverty and depression (National Indian Council on Aging, 1978).

Other studies, however, suggest these negative findings may be somewhat overdrawn and possibly inaccurate (Hockschild, 1973). Hockschild suggests that previous studies are "age centric" and ignore the elderly's view of themselves and their viable roles in society. In many traditional tribal societies, the elderly are still a needed and highly respected people. Wisdom and experience (the products of having lived a long time) were of value to the rest of the Indian community. Some previously mentioned roles are still viable in contemporary Indian society. The elderly Indians can and do make valuable contributions to their communities. They are included in tribal councils; many function as spiritual leaders of their communities. Some participate in foster parent programs in both urban and rural/reservation areas (Myerhoff, Simic and Weibel, 1982). Identification of these and other culturally viable roles or old age careers and their contribution to successful aging is another focus of this article.

THE RESEARCH ORIENTATION - INDIANS AND AGING AS A CONTINUATION OF LONGITUDINAL COMMUNITY STUDIES.

For the last ten (10) years I have worked with American Indian communities in Los Angeles, rural California and Oklahoma as well as on Arizona, New Mexico and South Dakota reservations.[2] My earliest research foci were adaptation and acculturation patterns, the process by which tribal people from predominatly rural areas problem-solve and develop coping strategies by which life crises are resolved in a novel social environment (Weibel, 1977; Fiske and Weibel, 1980).

For the last four (4) years those community studies evolved into a study of Indian drinking patterns and superimposed, as well as indigenous, alcohol abuse treatment interventions (Weibel, 1981, 1982; Weibel and Weisner, 1980a & b; Weibel, Weisner and Long, 1981, 1982, Weibel et al., 1981). In these studies we demonstrated the social, cultural and psychological antecedents of drinking patterns as life career processes which include predictable periods of increased alcohol consumption as well as periods of recession (ibid.).

Age is a powerful predictor variable of drinking levels in the overall urban Indian sample, (Weibel and Weisner, 1980b; Weibel, Weisner and Long, 1981, 1982). Between the ages of seventeen and twenty-nine most Indian people who drink, tend to drink frequently and in substantial amounts (ibid.). It is a time of youthful restiveness and relative impunity from negative sanctioning as a result of routinely heavy alcohol consumption. By the time urban Indians are in their mid-thirties, however, the normative pattern is reduction of gross alcohol consumption. Few American Indians over 50 years of age drink heavily. The few older people who do drink abusively, are thought by the community to "have a drinking problem". The normative Indian lifetime drinking career fits a curvilinear model.

There are cultural explanations for the diminution of alcohol consumption with increased age. The high status role of elder spokesperson and moral leader of the community is still viable in American Indian societies (Judge, 1978; Amoss, 1981). Some elders choose to follow the way of the shaman, a life career choice tra-

ditionally associated with advancing age and ideally associated with abstention from alcohol consumption. Grandparents take on caretaking roles for their children's children as biological parents are often absent from the home due to work commitments or heavy and disabling drinking careers. Heavy alcohol consumption is counterproductive to the enactment of these culturally viable social roles. For these reasons heavy alcohol consumption in old age is anomalous behavior in contemporary American Indian society.

We also found wide variation in drinking career profiles across sex, current drinking levels, and location. For instance, in a repeated measures test of the curvilinear pattern of the modal lifetime drinking careers mentioned earlier the interactive effect of age level with sex shows that men's scores fit a curvilinear model, while women's beer drinking fits a linear model. In other words, the older women who do drink heavily tend to increase their consumption gradually toward age 40 (Weibel, Weisner and Long, 1982). We suspect that this anomalous pattern is associated with fewer opportunities for the expression of culturally valued roles (i.e. the grandmother caretaker) among the dispersed urban Indian population, and what Moore (1978) has referred to as limited "arenas of honor".

This study is a response to the observed drinking pattern differences across sex and location in middle and old age, and the hypothetical cultural explanations of the observed differences, coupled with the natural maturation of the Los Angeles urban Indian Community and the increasing incidence of the study participants "going home again". It became an evolutional eventuality

that our next research effort would be the documentation of those cultural, economic, and psychological influences which shape the life careers of maturing urban Indian communities.

This study addresses the following issues:

1. How and why do Indians make the decision to either remain in urban areas in old age or return to reservation life?

2. If the decision to remain in the urban setting is made, what lines of communication and social networks support living out one's life in an urban setting?

3. If the decision to return to reservation life is made, what is the process by which a person re-enters and assumes a role and function in a society from which the individual has been absent for most of their adult lives and in which major changes have occurred of which the returning elder may not be aware? What are the processes by which one rebuilds facilitating social ties? What roles are available to the returning elder? What are the social-psychological benefits of the re-entry process?

4. Are there differences between those social functions assumed by elder women and elder men? Are there functionally satisfying roles aside from shamanism and grandparental child caretaking which elderly Indian men can assume? Do elder women fare better (or worse as our alcohol abuse findings suggest) as senior members of American Indian communities?

METHODS

DEFINITIONAL CRITERION OF THE ETHNIC AGE CATEGORY, ELDERLY INDIAN

One of the first methodological issues to be resolved is: how old is an old Indian? Conflicting age categories (e.g., 45 years and older in one study and over 60 years in another) indicate that an exclusively chronological definition is most often employed at the expense of ignoring a complex system of social markers (American Indian Physicians Association, 1978). In Montana's state plan for the elderly, for instance, authority

was sought and granted under the Older American Act to consider American Indians "old" at age 45 in recognition of the social facts of these peoples life conditions (Judge, 1978).

Hill (1970) concludes that measures of longevity are often misused by persons describing the differences in the health statuses of the American Indians with those of other ethnic groups. In 1967, the expectation of life at birth for Indians was 60 years; the average age at death was 46 years. Life expectancy of the total population in the United States was 70 years and the average age at death was 65 years. The common mistake is to compare the Indians' average age at death with the life expectancy in the general population. Another error is to use the terms as though they essentially mean the same thing. Since 1955, however, white and non-whites have shown gradual increases in the average age of death when deaths of children under the age of 5 were excluded. Even though general Indian mortality rates are improving any definition of Indian old age must take into account that Indians die earlier than non-Indians. Therefore, how one determines old age may be culturel-specific.

Retirement age is our definitional criterion for identification of elderly Indians. This sampling decision gave some latitude as to permissable lower age limit. Several members of the proposed sample had been career armed forces personnel who had retired after 20 years of service as early as age 50. This socio-structural, rather than chronological, definition of old age emphasizes the social, cultural and psychological nature of the behavioral shifts and opportunities retirement from the public work arena allows an individual including the decision to "go

home again".

SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

In the last ten (10) years I have had the opportunity to work with more than 200 Indian families in Los Angeles. I have kept in communication with a majority of the families over the years so that location of family members who had reached retirement age either in the city or "back home" was known. The findings in this article are based on case history data from six families of retirees both in the city as well as "back home". The illustrative vignettes which underscore the preliminary findings are taken from initial contact and follow-up calls made at regular intervals through an 18 month period.

Life histories had been elicited from each of the participants in previous research efforts. More recent communications have dealt with issues such as possible moves back to the home land, reasons why or why not to effect an exodus from the city, family developments, relative states of well-being, current community involvement, and contemporary problem-solving strategies.

One Creek, one Choctaw, and one Sioux family still live in Los Angeles without immediate plans to effect an exodus. One Sioux and two Choctaw families have returned to their respective home lands in South Dakota and Eastern Oklahoma.

TO STAY, OR TO GO HOME AGAIN

All six families maintained high ethnic profiles during the years they lived in Los Angeles. Regular involvement in Indian Center activities, volunteer work as well as paid services to the Indian Free Clinics, participation in powwow clubs, language

classes or all-Indian churches and visits to their ancestral home are consistent characteristics of all the life histories. Differential level of ethnic identification intensity through the life cycle does not seem to be a major influence among these families on the decision to go home again or remain. Rather, location of significant family members, viable membership in the community of choice, economic pragmatism, and availability of health services were offered as explanations for present residence choices as the following vignettes illustrate.

> I'd often thought about going back. If it were up to me, I'd do it. But you know, my husband doesn't speak the language and, of course, all the children are here in the city. We'd get to missing them if we went back (Creek woman, 53, Los Angeles).

> Well, all my kids are just a few miles away from my house. And I'm the secretary of the church and a council member of the Southwestern Christian Conference. I'm pretty busy here and just don't have the time to sit around and get lonely (Choctaw woman, 67, Los Angeles).

> There's nothing for us to go back for. Our kids are here. We have our own house in the valley. It's all paid for. We never had a problem adjusting to living in Los Angeles. We go back every once in a while for a visit but our life is really here (Sioux woman, 62, Los Angeles)

> The first year I was out here I got so lonely for my kids I thought about going back every day. My friends gave me 6 months (to come back to Los Angeles). Well, my husband told me to give

it a year and to find some things to do. (You remember how busy I used to be in Los Angeles?) Well, I got involved in church activities. And they have free hot lunches for the senior citizens. So I go into town each day to pick up the mail and get my free lunch. I make a day of it. And I try to get to as many of the pow wows and chapter meetings as possible. So I keep pretty busy. And then we were building the new house and putting in the vegetable garden, so the time flew by. Now I wouldn't think of living in that smog. Oh, I might go back for a week or two, just to see the kids. But that's about all (Sioux woman, 63, Pine Ridge Reservation).

You see, my dad died and I inherited some acreage near Idabel (southeastern Oklahoma). Well, I sold some of it off, just enough to build a small house on the remaining property. And I had been pretty careful about holding onto my money all those years I worked in the city. So I had enough to come back here and live pretty well. With Social Security and some lease money, and what my new wife gets, we can live pretty well out here for a lot less money than it costs in Los Angeles (Choctaw man, 63, Oklahoma).

Poor old Charlie,[3] we thought he wasn't going to make it last year. You know, he got to drinking pretty regular there for a while. His liver got damaged. He would go into comas for days at a time. He'd go to the hospital and just seemed to get worse. Well, his wife took him back to Oklahoma and got him into the Indian Hospital there. They say he seems to be doing better. He gets better for weeks at a time. Oh, he's had some relapses but the family says he's getting stronger all the time. You know

the medical service is free. They would have been busted if they had to pay for that service out here (friend of a Choctaw man, 67, currently living in Oklahoma).

GOING HOME AGAIN: THE SEARCH FOR CULTURALLY VIABLE ROLES

Ethnographic description of the factors involved in "going home again" is limited to one case history for which substantial documentation, over time, has been collected. The two people who returned to their ancestral homes in Oklahoma were excluded from this discussion for the following reasons: The man who inherited property had returned to Oklahoma in 1976, years before documentation of the exodus of Indians from Los Angeles began. While we do have his retrospective remarks we were not privy to the re-entry process as it unfolded. The other Choctaw man is too ill to be considered as having effected a viable re-entry into his ancestral community.

The Sioux woman who went "back home", however, did so only 18 months ago. We were in regular communication during the year before she went back home and throughout the 18 months since her return. The following excerpts from her case history provides a poignant record of the processual nature of re-entry and achievement of role integrity "back home" as well as the value of longitudinal data collection.

Mabel Walking Eagle had been a vigorous, hardworking and involved member of the Los Angeles Indian community for twenty-six years. During that time she had maintained steady employment in various service organizations (hospitals and schools)

and received a B.A. degree in the social sciences. She also raised four children to maturity in the urban environment.

Although Mabel's residence during the last 26 years was officially Los Angeles she maintained close personal ties with families who had remained on the reservation. Maintenance of these ties included extended trips "back home" at least once a year. She was considered a high status elder by those Indians in Los Angeles who maintained high involvement in ethnic activities. It was to Mabel that members of the urban Indian community turned for verification of authenticity in ceremonial, art and craft matters.

She and her husband had carefully saved and wisely invested their savings in real estate, the sale of which assured them a financially secure return to her ancestral home and lands which she had inherited from her mother. They returned to her birth place; a small hamlet on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. The hamlet, and tribal administrative center, is situated approximately five miles from her grandparental home in which she spent a major portion of her childhood.

The following vignettes are extracted from monthly phone calls to her since her return. These excerpts were chosen as they best illustrate the expected, as well as unexpected vagaries of the re-entry process.

> June 18, 1981
> Mabel Walking Eagle has been back on the reservation for approximately 6 weeks. She is busy with plans for building a new home on lands which she both inherited from her mother as well as bought from neighbors. She misses her children and con-

tinually lobbies them to come visit and/or live with her. They, however, have their own ties to friends and activities in Los Angeles and resist and/or ignore her entreaties much to her displeasure.

July 15, 1981
Her daily routine includes a drive into the hamlet for the mail, laundry and a free meal at the Chapter House provided to all reservation elderly. Used to a busy social life, she is bored and has applied for employment as a teaching assistant in the local BIA school. She suspects, however, that locals, as well as young people with children to support, would get hired first. She hasn't been back long enough to be considered a "local".

August 15, 1981
Mabel has been attending the monthly Chapter House meetings in her hometown. Recently she campaigned for council membership. She senses that one or two of the older people in the community resent her outspokenness and have made reference to her long absence and only recent return to the reservation.

Apparently age, alone, does not warrant respect nor guarantee ascriptive status in contemporary Sioux society. She has not been offered a position in the school system but feels the work on the new house is sufficient to keep her busy. Besides, pow wow season is upon them. Mabel has been an inveterate pow wow participant all her life and would travel considerable distances to participate in a good dance. She seems to be settling in.

September 16, 1981
People in her immediate community have come to think of Mabel as a ready source of cash. Her neighbors'

ambivalencies to her presence among them are expressed in both grudging references to her "having made good and being loaded" and the ease with which they approach her for loans.

"They do it in the Sioux way. Nobody would just ask me for money. Instead, they come over with a star quilt, or some beadwork, or a gun and ask me to hold it for them until their checks come in. Usually they need to buy gas to get into town, or the clinic, or for food."

When I asked if she gives out loans she explained, "Well, if they're drunk I don't. And if I know they are heavy drinkers I usually don't unless they look desperate. I make sure they know that it is for food or gas and if I see them drunk I won't ever loan them money again." Do they pay you back? "Yes, eventually. They pay a little on account when they can. Sometimes it takes a couple of months before it's all paid up. I keep a record of it all. But, gosh, it's getting to be expensive. I don't know how much longer I can keep it up!"

The concepts of community responsibility for its individual members, sharing, generosity and generalized reciprocity are engrained in the character profile of the ideal Sioux (Erikson 1963, Driver 1975, Grobsmith 1981, Lowie 1963). Family and community members are, from earliest childhood, enmeshed in a complicated weave of social, emotional and financial obligations. One obvious resource Mabel brought to the community in which unemployment runs as high as 40 percent during some seasons was an apparent cache of ready cash. She would have "not acted like

a Sioux" if she had refused to share her cache with those less fortunate members of her community.

The criteria by which she limited the loans is both idiosyncratic and culturally appropriate. While Mabel does drink alcoholic beverages in moderation she holds strong views about the alcohol abuse exhibited by large numbers of her community peers. Her views echo the concern of church organizations, social service agencies and afflicted family members on the reservation. Her unwillingness to support alcohol abuse would be understood and supported by large numbers of people in her community, many of whom are members of the service agencies and political associations to which she had hoped to gain membership.

> October 19, 1981
> Mabel decided to have a give-away (a traditional Siouan ceremony by which goods are redistributed and political, familial, and assistance relationships are publically acknowledged). She is busy planning it and making and collecting the goods she will distribute among friends and family. The overt purpose of the give-away and the occasion on which it will take place is the dedication of tombstones she is purchasing for her mother's grave.
>
> While she does not consciously state it, the give-away appears to be an attempt to express, in a public and culturally viable way, her adherence to Siouan ceremonial traditions and acknowledgement of the strong mother-daughter dyad in Sioux life.
>
> March 14, 1982
> Mabel had traveled to Los Angeles via truck to pick up her mother's tombstone. Having heard about a

child of an impoverished single mother she had attempted to adopt the child. She had approached an established medicine man in a nearby community to ask his advice about the adoption. He had advised her against it as the child was "not Sioux and not family."

Shamanic traditions are still practiced on the Sioux reservations (Grobsmith 1981). That Mabel would consult a local medicine person in this matter became public knowledge. That action further indicated her continued adherence to traditional ways of problem-solving as well as to the Siouan belief system.

Informal adoption of orphans or children from impoverished homes is another well-established Siouan tradition which had meaning for this woman. Her validity as a member of her chosen community was enhanced by her willingness to accept the medicine person's advice and not procede further in the informal adoption even though it would have satisfied certain voids in her personal life.

July 16, 1982
Her daughter and son-in-law had been out to visit. They left their 3 year old son with Mabel for the summer. She is kept busy with the new garden, church activities and the pow wow season. She loves having their grandchild around and has asked her daughter to let him stay longer. She knows, however, it is not a realistic request and is already attempting to think of ways to fill her time when he is gone.

October 23, 1982
Mabel was in the brightest spirits since her return. We talked at length about her first year "back home".

She reminisced about her initial loneliness as a result of being separated from her children and how hurt she was by their reluctance to come out to the reservation for a visit. She and her husband, however, are now fully acclimated.

"We had two big gardens this year. We make our own bread and pies. We can our own fruits and vegetables. We collected wild fruit and berries and made jelly. We made enough preserves last year to last the whole winter. I hadn't done some of those things since I was a child living with my grandmother. We're living like pioneers."

When asked if she is still thinking about working, she explained, "After being here for a year I feel I can't take a paying job, mainly, for moral reasons. There's too many young people out of work here who need a job more than I do. And with the house and garden and council work, I'm making a life for myself here without working. I can come and go as I please. If I feel like staying home I can. If I feel like going away for a couple of days to a pow wow I can. I like the freedom of not working right now."

In a second attempt she was elected to the district Chapter House council and is now deeply involved in local politics. It gives her a sense of contribution.

The happiest development for her, however, is the opportunity she has been given by the tribe to take up a traditionally viable older woman's role. Two pre-school children had been made wards of the tribe. Mabel offered to be their temporary foster parent. She has had them with her for two months. She chirped gaily about all the things she is doing for

the children. "It feels so good to have kids around the house. I feel useful again."

November 5, 1982
Today I received a formal request from the Pine Ridge Tribal Social Service Agency to comment on Mrs. Walking Eagle's fitness to serve as a foster parent. I wrote what I hope is a glowing tribute as this work seems vital to Mabel's sense of well-being and contribution to her tribal community.

SUMMARY REMARKS

For the retired Sioux elder the process of "going home" has been an exploration of viable high status roles possible for her to assume in a community from which she had been separated geographically for over a quarter of a century. Yearly visits to her ancestral home, and regular, deliberate and intense involvement in traditional Siouan as well as pan-Indian ceremonial life over the years she was away helped to validate her "belongingness" and sense of familiarity with the host community.

Unanticipated deterrents to high status role attainment were the resistance of established community elders to inclusion of the newly arrived interloper in tribal affairs, the unwelcomed role (money lender) which less financially secure community members attributed to her, and limited access to work opportunities and social service activities through which she had gained recognition and status enhancement in her urban Indian community.

After a year and a half of experimentation Mrs. Walking Eagle has resolved the dissonance in her life through attainment of two culturally appropriate age-set roles. Election to the

Chapter House council is peer validation of her community membership. Grandparental caretaking is a long established familial structure in many Native American societies among whom are included the Sioux (Driver 1975, Grobsmith 1981). It is a role uniquely suited to a woman elder who has raised four children of her own as well as various sets of biological grandchildren. These culture-specific, age-appropriate roles provide the mechanisms by which a Sioux woman could not only "go back home" but, in old age, feel "useful again."

FOOT-NOTES

1. Throughout this paper quotation marks encasing phrases indicate popular indigenous use of these terms among the participants of this study.

2. This research has been funded, in part, by grants from the Ford Foundation, the California State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs and the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

3. Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of the individuals.

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